

Abstinence

Abstinence makes the heart grow fonder and so the greatest sybarite and the jolliest *bon viveur* will know the virtue of abstinence in adding to the renewed pleasure of what he has denied himself. After any prolonged period such as Lent, the rediscovered joy of indulgence will be immensely enhanced, may even prove overwhelming. To abstain, therefore, from a loved pleasure, is mere commonsense, as custom stales the appetite.

It is all too easy on the other hand to make a sin of abstinence. To do without simply for the supposed inherent virtue of doing without is contrary to scripture as well as sense. God made the world and he saw that it was 'good'. The ascetics were mistaken when they supposed that earthly things were inferior to heavenly, material to spiritual. There are different levels of good, that is all, and the true virtue is not abstinence but temperance; but constant self denial, especially of matter, and of fleshly pleasures, is unhealthy, and a crime against life.

Action

Remember, it may take a second, even the fraction of a second, but the effect may be permanent and irrevocable.

Action is momentary,

The movement of a muscle, this way or that.

Suffering is long, obscure and infinite.



Actresses

Their silk stockings and white bosoms excite the amorous propensities even of the scholarly Dr Johnson, but you need neither silk stockings nor a white bosom to be an actress. Your hose can be worsted and your breast burnt by the sun. You do not even require a stage, or a play, for the world's one, and life's one, and you are the player. All men are your audience, and if you are fortunate, one man in particular. For him you must act well, playing out the part life has assigned to you: to entice, enchant, enfold and enjoy constant attention, admiration and applause.

Adultery I

What men call gallantry and gods adultery

Is much more common where the climate's sultry.



As Byron well knew, therefore, adultery is best committed abroad, though not too far east, where they would stone you for a wink. The further east you go, the lower you fall in the rank and file of creation. There a man may be as promiscuous as a monkey but a woman must be chaste as ice. Italy and Spain are splendid places for the fickle, but France is the bed and birthplace of inconstancy, as it was of *amour courtois*, while there, if your man proves untrue to you and you stab him in the heart, they will accord you a public

Immortality

*Essential oils are wrung;
The attar from the rose
Is not expressed by suns alone,
It is the gift of screws.*

*The general rose decays;
But this, in lady's drawer,
Makes summer when the Lady lies
In ceaseless rosemary.*

She received bulletins all day from Immortality; it was the only news she heard: sufficient for you to listen to, assured as you may be of your own immortal soul, and of the pleasing ironies of which she writes, as time gurgles on, and trades briskly fly, and gentlemen of commerce listen to the news.

*Don't listen to the wireless
Or read about the stocks.
Dispatches come unbidden
As you slumber in your box.*

*And when your lid is lifted
And you listen at God's door,
You'll know what he is saying
For you've heard it all before.*



Impotence

A good cure for it is housemaid's knee, as many's the housemaid has taught the old master. Otherwise obtain from the farmer the bull's pizzle, root and bulbs, when the bull is over with it. Use only this to make stock, and for each year of the bull's life, boil it down for an hour. You will need a good-sized pot, since an old bull's testicles could grace a bowling green or disgrace the round-shot on a man-o-war, and the pizzle itself measure up to a good sized poker. It must be chopped into good pot-size pieces. When you make the soup after the stock, which may be of any variety, be sure to grate in plenty of carrot, or any other sweet vegetable, as these parts of the bull are not savoury but very strong. After a week of this broth the enfeebled man will spring up and take the field with honour.

Income and Outgoings

Keep your Accounts most carefully, detailing the cost of every article under separate headings, e.g. food, clothing, furnishings, crockery, domestic repairs, and so on, that you may ascertain the exact nature of the annual expenditure; and if it exceeds the annual income then you will be in a position to decide where and when economies should be practised. One method is the allotment of a fixed weekly amount to house-keeping, so that if one week exceeds it, the next must pay for it. This is a system which allows

Patriotism

Be sure to wave a large a large flag, as you do not know whom it will cover, or how many. And remember this simple verse:

*Here dead lie we because we did not choose
To live and shame the land from which we sprung.
Life, to be sure, is nothing much to lose;
But young men think it is, and we were young.*

Personal Behaviour

Refrain from the following: meddling; lying; anger; affectation; envy; hypocrisy; pride; sloth; gluttony; and spite.

Embrace action; punctuality; precision; politeness; kindness; gentleness; friendship; and personal cleanliness.

Love all, trust a few, do wrong to none.

Poetry

A life without poetry is like Omar without wine. Bread is the staff, water the draught, and poetry is the wine of life. Dull would you be of soul if you would choose to live your life without it. Of modern poets read Miss Dickinson and Lord Tennyson. Of the classics read Homer and Virgil; Dante, Ariosto and Tasso; Shakespeare and Milton. Of our Romantic Poets read all, but especially Wordsworth, who

defines poetry as the 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling', and at the same time and on the same occasion, as 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'. This would seem a paradox, except if you bottle your feelings like strong wine, and later savour them in the quietness of a more mature hour. All poetry is sad. There is no true poetry which is triumphant, though it may sound so on the surface, for poetry is the most private expression of our deepest longings, which can never be fulfilled, as man is born to trouble and discontent. As the sparks fly upwards Shelley puts it best:

*We look before and after
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.*

Shelley penned a brave Defence of poetry. He writes that 'poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world'. Refined by poetry into a better understanding of others, and of your own self, you should strive to become such a humble legislator of your own little world. And so many ameliorated little systems make up a cosmos, in which the Muse is your God, and poetry your Bible, and you play your part in the Creation.

